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By Sarah Bricker Hunt

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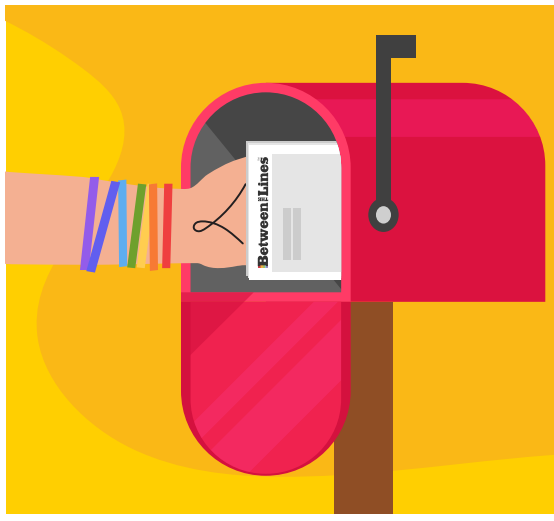
Cover: Sabin performs at Five15. Photo: Andrew Potter



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5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY LIAM CLYMER

As LGBTQ+ Americans process the election outcome, many of us feel a mix of frustration, resilience and renewed determination. In a political climate that sometimes questions our right to exist, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. But this is when our community's strength shines brightest, rooted in a legacy of perseverance.

Now more than ever, it's essential to seek out community. Make plans to see queer Grammy-winning saxophonist Dave Koz, gather with friends at an LGBTQ+ game night, where laughter and friendship bring relief, or cheer on the fierce competitors at a roller derby match, celebrating unapologetic self-expression. On the practical side, consider updating your passport if you've changed your name or gender marker.

These gatherings are more than events. They're affirmations of our shared journey and unbreakable solidarity. Together, we find joy, pride and strength — powerful reminders that, even in challenging times, we are never alone.

Lansing Roller Derby. Photo: Redshift Photography

1 Support the Black 'n' Blue

Campy nicknames, colorful uniforms and a dramatic competition on wheels — the core aspects of roller derby call to the queer community at Lansing Roller Derby's Black 'n' Blue roller derby tournament, set for Nov. 29-Dec.1 in Mason.

Derby player Veronica Cockrell (Red Zeppelin) told Pride Source that the roller derby environment is incredibly welcoming. "[It's] very inclusive and welcoming to everyone regardless of self-identification," she said. "It's awesome to be able to go out and see skaters supporting, teaching and helping each other on and off the track and to be in an environment where everyone is welcomed and celebrated for being themselves."

Nov. 29-Dec. 1 Ingham County Fairgrounds (700 E. Ash St., Mason). Reserve tickets at bit.ly/3YSNTJU and learn more at instagram.com/lansingrollerderby.

2 Update Your Passport

While the election outcome may be out of your hands at this point, it's empowering to work on the things you can control. Now, more than ever, is a good time to take action to make sure your identity will be seen and respected. The University of Michigan's Spectrum center is doing its part by holding a trans and nonbinary passport clinic.

During the event, students and community members can meet with Washtenaw County Clerk's office officials to renew, apply for or make adjustments to passports including updated gender markers or name changes. Don't wait; get your documents in order now.

Nov. 18, 12-2 p.m., Weiser Hall (500 Church St, Ann Arbor) Register at spectrumcenter.umich.edu/events.

Dave Koz. Photo: davekoz.com

3 Get Tickets for Dave Koz

With Thanksgiving looking like it might be a bit strenuous this year, why not skip ahead to planning for the holidays? Gay Grammy-nominated saxophonist Dave Koz is coming to Detroit as a part of his 2024 Christmas Tour. With Jonathan Butler joining him, in addition to a slew of other musical talents, Koz's Christmas Tour promises to bring a fresh take on music rich with tradition. The show is bound to sell out, so reserve your tickets now.

Dec. 15, 7:30 p.m., Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts (350 Madison, Detroit). Ticketing information at bit.ly/4huxmmx.

4

Find Housing Support

Affirmations, Ferndale's LGBTQ+ community center, will host a Homlessness Support Clinic on Nov. 18 from 1 -3 p.m. "We understand that homelessness can be a challenging and stressful experience, but you don't have to go through it alone," press materials read. "Our clinic is a safe and welcoming space where you can get the support and assitance you need to get back on your feet."

The clinic, offered through Affirmations and the Community Housing Network, will feature walk-in appointments for community members 18 and up who are facing or experiencing homelessness, including those living on the street, people living in in unsafe environments and people experiencing mental illness. No appointment necessary.

Nov. 18, 1-3 p.m., Affirmations (290 W. 9 Mile Road, Ferndale).

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5

Relax at a Queer-Friendly Game Night

Relax among welcoming, affirming new friends at an LGBTQ-inclusive game night in Lansing.

The city's Salus Center offers a monthly Gayme Night on the third Saturday of the month at it downtown headquarters (408 S. Washington Square, Lansing) from 5-7 p.m.. Snacks, drinks and board games are included (or feel free to bring your own and teach other participants how to play). Learn more at saluscenter.org.

You'll also find queer-friendly gaming each Tuesday through LAGE (Lansing-Area Games and Events) at Frank's Press Box (7216 W. Saginaw Hwy., Lansing) and The Gaming Cantina (4750 Hagadorn Rd., East Lansing), starting at 6:30 p.m. Learn more at meetup.com/lansing.

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Our Trust (and Our Hearts) Are Broken. Where Do We Go From Here?

Wherever it is, we must get there together

Well, we have our answer.

It is clear that in 2024, protecting the rights of LGBTQ+ community members was not top of mind for most American voters. In fact, late polling just ahead of the election indicated that for most voters, issues like gender-affirming care and other LGBTQ+ topics were low on the list compared to things like the economy and immigration.

We can take some comfort there — most Republican voters likely weren't thinking of our community at all when they voted and they didn't consider their votes as particularly anti-LGBTQ+, but the flip side is that our literal safety was not a priority for these voters, either. And those voters inevitably included people we thought we could trust to have our backs. It's painful, and if you haven't given yourself permission to sit with that pain, we're giving it to you now. This one's going to sting for a while.

> *"I know many people feel like we are entering a dark time, but for the benefit of us all, I hope that is not the case. But here's the thing: America, if it is, let us fill the sky with the light of a brilliant, brilliant billion of stars — the light of optimism, of faith, of truth, and of service."*
>
> — Vice President Kamala Harris

Sadly, misplaced trust in the alleged "greater good" is nothing new for minority groups in America (or globally). The LGBTQ+ rights we have on the books today have been secured by blood and grit over many decades, led by courageous advocates who repeatedly lost and pressed on to fight again and again until they won ugly battles based on principles that should be easy for every human to agree on. It's what this community has always done, and what it will continue to do. Like the queer pioneers who came before us, we will channel resilience and crush efforts to dampen our spirits or restrict our freedom to live authentically.

In so many ways, our country has failed us. But friends, we cannot fail one another.

Just as we practice self-care and advocacy, we must intentionally practice community. There are bridges to be built between generations, disparate backgrounds and identities and opportunities to create bonds that will strengthen our resolve and collective resilience. When you're ready, seek out opportunities for LGBTQ+ advocacy, but also simple connection. This community has perfected the art of "found family." If you're in need of some new brothers and sisters and cousins, you only need to show up.

Remember — this election outcome is overall a bad thing. But it's not *everything*. Sometimes, we win at the ballot box. Sometimes, we even win in the legislature or the courts, but we only truly lose when we lose sight of one another.

When Vice President Kamala Harris gave her concession speech last week, she shared a similar sentiment, drawing upon these words from Martin Luther King, Jr.: "Only when it is dark enough can you see the stars."

"I know many people feel like we are entering a dark time," she said, "but for the benefit of us all, I hope that is not the case. But here's the thing: America, if it is, let us fill the sky with the light of a brilliant, brilliant billion of stars — the light of optimism, of faith, of truth, and of service."

We urge you to resist the isolation that may be calling to you in a dark moment. You aren't alone out here, and the people doing work to keep you connected to invaluable resources will still keep doing that work. Don't let their efforts be in vain. Support local LGBTQ+ organizations like Affirmations, MiGen, Transgender Michigan, Stand with Trans, GLSEN, ACLU Michigan, PFLAG, Trans Sistas Project, Equality Michigan and the dozens of grassroots Pride organizations you can find throughout Michigan.

We Are Here For You

The vital post-election work of journalists

The days following this election have been filled with raw emotion — frustration, sadness, uncertainty and fear for the future. For many in our LGBTQ+ community, including the BTL staff, this recent election left us reeling. Navigating such a turbulent landscape, we struggled to process what lay ahead. Yet in the midst of that turmoil, our team of journalists — managing editor Sarah Bricker Hunt, staff content creator Liam Clymer and contributor Jordyn Bradley, among them — kept doing what they do best: reporting with integrity, compassion and commitment. I commend them and their work, as they cover topics close to the heart.

Their work, covering the election's fallout and its long-term impacts, is vital for guiding our community through these uncertain times. In these early, chaotic days, they pressed forward, delivering stories that inform, elevate and unite us — even when it may have felt easier to retreat into silence.

During our editorial meeting the morning after the election, I felt like a deflated balloon and was overwhelmed with emotion, struggling to find the words to capture the weight of it all. Personally, I kept thinking back to the hope I felt when I went to the White House earlier this year, invited by the Biden-Harris administration for the annual Pride picnic — an invitation I don't expect to see again for at least four years.

As those thoughts swirled in my mind, we spoke openly about the emotional toll of this moment and the difficult balance between self-care and the urgency of our work. It was a vulnerable conversation that reminded me how deeply our shared values and commitment to community run.

At BTL, we understand our role isn't just about reporting the facts; it is about amplifying LGBTQ+ voices, providing clarity and helping us stay informed in a time when information can feel as fractured as the world around us. Journalism at this moment isn't just about sharing stories — it's about sharing our stories and helping us see ourselves in the larger narrative of our community.

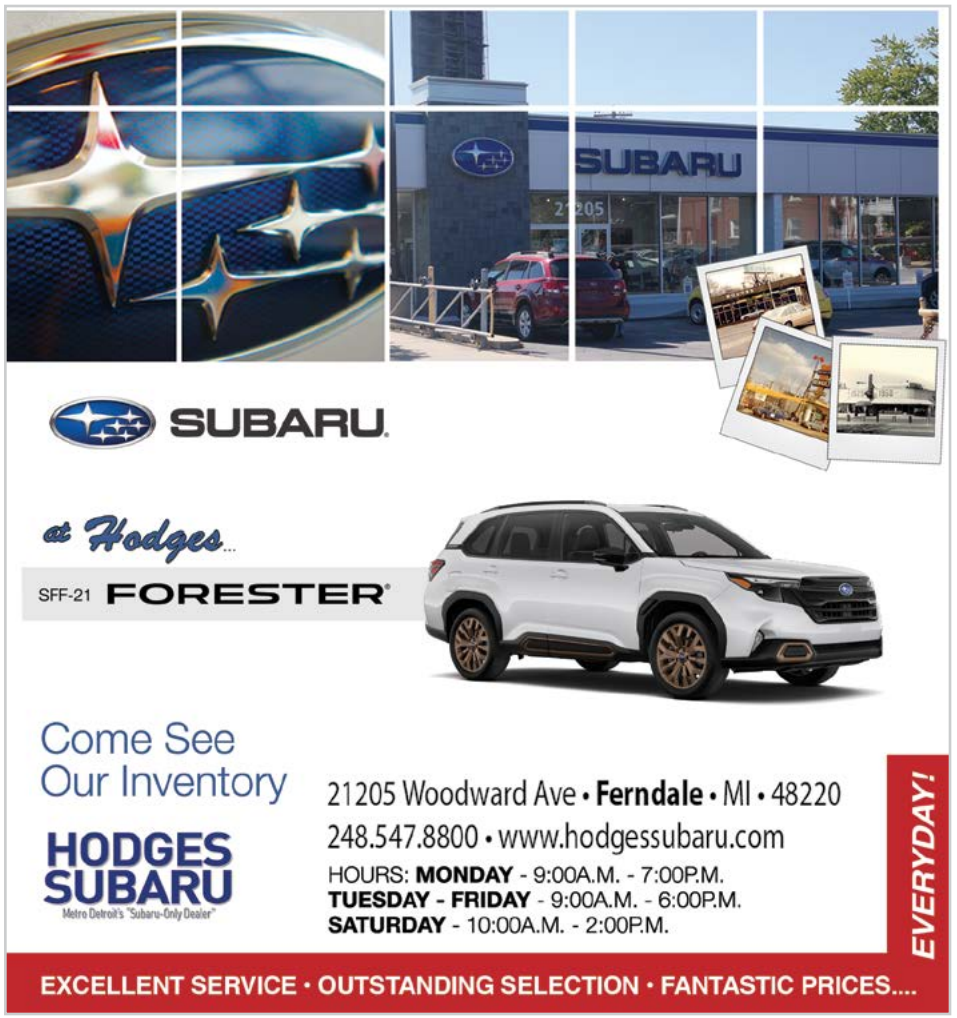
As we continue to navigate these turbulent times, it's crucial to remember that **this is your source for LGBTQ+ journalism**, a resource created by, for and about us. More than ever, we are committed to telling stories that reflect our collective journey, highlighting the voices of those who have been historically marginalized and continue to be, and making sure that diverse experiences focused on the entire scope of the LGBTQ+ community are represented. We are not just a publication; we are a community-driven space where we find pieces of ourselves within each other's stories.

In this spirit, we invite you to share your voice with us. Whether it's a story of joy, struggle, activism or triumph, we want to amplify it. Reach out to us at **editor@pridesource.com**. The strength of our community lies in our shared experiences.

No matter what, we will always have our stories. We will share them, proudly and triumphantly. And together, we will keep moving forward.

In solidarity,

Chris Azzopardi
Editorial Director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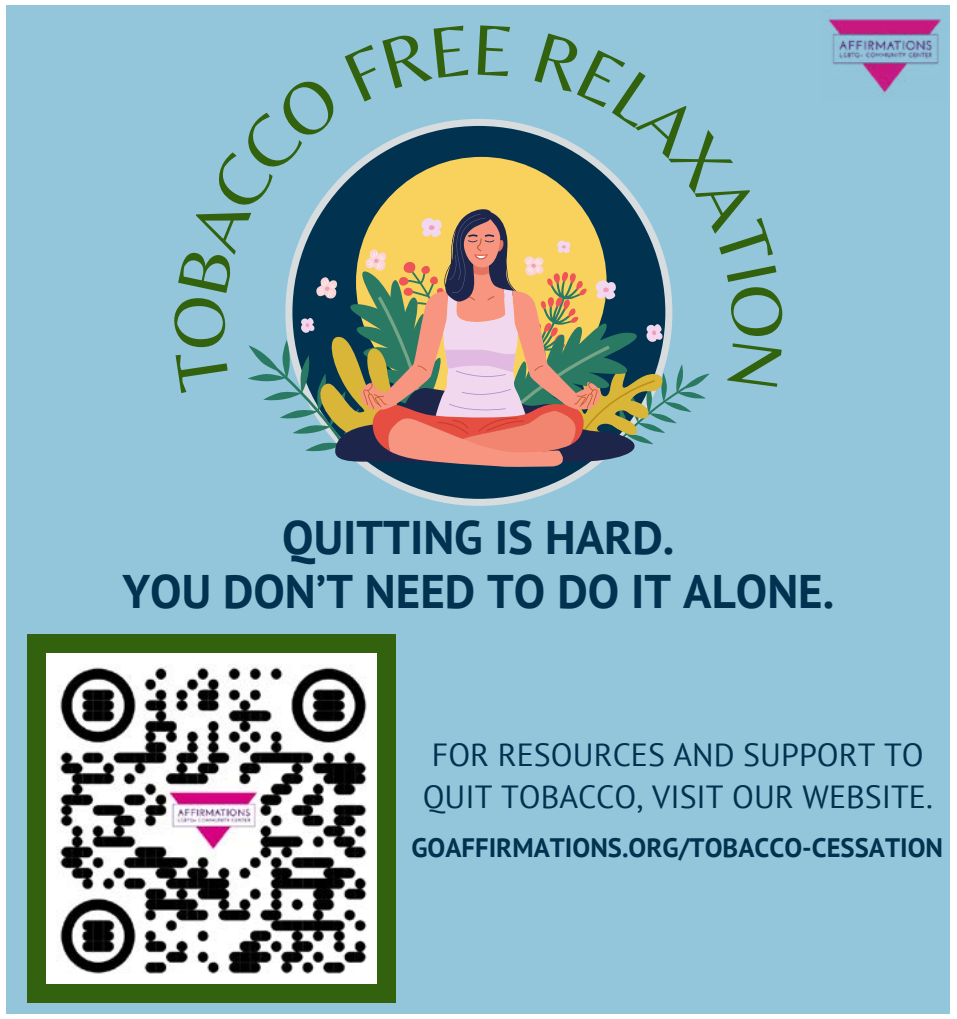
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Key Election Results

U.S. Senate

(Won) Elissa Slotkin

U.S. Congress

(Lost) Curtis Hertel, District 7 (Elissa Slotkin's former district)

Michigan State House Representative Candidates

(Won) Mike McFall, District 14

(Won) Laurie Pohustky, District 17

(Won) Jason Hoskins, District 18

(Won) Noah Arbit, District 20

(Won) Jason Morgan, District 23

(Won) Emily Dievendorf, District 77

County Office Candidates

(Won) Domonique Clemons (Genesee County Clerk & Register of Deeds)

(Won) Dave Coulter (Oakland County Executive)

(Lost) Amrit Kohli (Oakland County Sheriff)

(Won) Eli Savit (Washtenaw County Prosecuting Attorney)

(Won) Alyshia Dyer (Washtenaw County Sheriff)

Judicial Candidates

(Won) S. Kerene Moore (15th District Court Judge)

Kerene Moore. Courtesy photo

City/Township Government Candidates

(Won) Jon Mallek (Ann Arbor City Council, Ward 2)

(Won) Travis Radina (Ann Arbor City Council, Ward 3)

(Won) Leslie Blackburn (Lodi Township Trustee)

Michigan, National LGBTQ+ Leaders Discuss Trump Win and What Comes Next

From the ACLU to HRC and Equality Michigan, advocates are mapping out a plan for our community

BY LIAM CLYMER

In the early morning of Nov. 6, Donald Trump won re-election, after previously being defeated in his 2020 incumbent race. Following him in his return to the White House is his record — consisting of two impeachments, 34 felony counts, one conviction, a sexual abuse charge and a slew of hateful comments and actions targeting the LGBTQ+ community.

However, his victory isn't the only one to pay attention to. A shift in the U.S. Senate and Michigan's state House — and new additions to the Michigan Supreme Court — all have the potential to change the day-to-day lives of LGBTQ+ Michiganders.

Trump's win

Executive director of Equality Michigan Erin Knott said LGBTQ+ community members can only speculate over what a Trump win may mean, but the tactics he used to get into office can shed a light on his intentions.

"He was President previously and we saw how he issued several executive actions, rolled out policy and took down resourceful websites," Knott told Pride Source after the election. "So at this point in time, I don't know what his presidency is going to look like. I do know that he declared victory after repeatedly lying about transgender people and children and that he stirred up hatred with millions of dollars in false and misleading anti-trans ads."

Staff attorney for the ACLU of Michigan's LGBT Project Jay Kaplan said that the anti-LGBTQ+ stance he ran on could translate into real policy.

Project 2025 suggests changing civil rights law to no longer include LGBTQ+ individuals in sex discrimination legal definitions, Kaplan explained.

And while Trump has tried to distance himself from Project 2025, his Agenda 47 maintains many of the same harmful LGBTQ+ practices, Kaplan noted. If implemented, it could mean prohibiting gender-affirming care under Medicare and attacking school districts supportive of transgender students through the threat of losing federal funding.

Kaplan said he believes the wave of Trump support came from those who might not agree with all of Trump's rhetoric. "I think some of this is triggered by anger and grievance about a lot of things," he said. "I want to believe that it's not directly targeted toward LGBTQ+ people."

"Many times the response from supporters of the campaign would be, 'Oh, he's not going to do that. That's not going to happen. That was written by the Heritage Foundation.' I hope that's true," Kaplan said.

What happened?

President of the Human Rights Campaign Kelley Robinson told Pride Source that an analysis of all of the factors that caused Harris' defeat is ongoing, but the loss of the popular vote is telling.

"The biggest thing that's sitting with me is that we didn't just lose the Electoral College, we also lost the popular vote," Robinson said. "I think what that says is there's something about the fears that Americans are feeling right now that we need to speak more closely to, particularly their fears around the economy."

She added that there needs to be more intention behind telling the story of election night. While Harris did lose the popular vote, that doesn't mean it wasn't a historic turnout in other ways.

"I think that there's a lot of work to do in understanding the what and the why, but I am very confident in what the LGBTQ+ community did — I mean 84% of us turned out for Kamala Harris, second to only Black women," Robinson said. "We saw extraordinary turnout in the battleground states of equality voters: people that care about LGBTQ+ issues."

Continuing to appeal to equality voters is key, even during a revamping of party strategies, Robinson said.

"This continues to be one of the most engaged constituencies in the country," she said. "So while we're doing all the analysis about why we may have lost, I don't want to lose [sight of] why we are still winning this demographic. We have to continue to advocate for pro-LGBTQ+ rights, laws and policies

See **Election Analysis**, page 23

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50 Years of Fabulous

As drag faces new challenges, the Trocks still have a powerful message to share

BY BRIDGETTE REDMAN

Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo. Photo: José Luis Marrero Medina

For 50 years, Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo has shown the world that ballet can be gay, comic, fun and world-class all at the same time. The troupe will do so again — twice — when their anniversary tour rolls into the Detroit Opera House on Nov. 23 and 24. And, of course, they'll be pulling out the stops to make the performances as exciting and memorable as possible.

Self-described as a gender-skewering comic ballet company that parodies the conventions of classical ballet, the Trocks, as they are affectionately known, have danced in some of the world's finest ballet houses. The Trockaderos were founded in 1974, when the Stonewall Uprising of 1969 was still a vivid memory. Their early shows were in New York at a stage belonging to a gay and lesbian political organization. They soon attracted critical acclaim and joined the National Endowment for the Arts Touring Program. They've since appeared in 43 countries and more than 660 cities worldwide. Their artistic director, Tory Dobrin, has been with them for nearly 45 of their 50 years, having joined the company in 1980 for a South American tour.

"The guys who want to dance in Trockadero come for a variety of reasons, but the dominant, salient reason is that they're comedians at heart," Dobrin told Pride Source. "They're the class clowns of the dance world."

When choreographers create new pieces for them, Dobrin said he tells them to focus on making an engaging piece because the comedy will sprout naturally from the dancers.

"What's important in terms of comedy is not to do the same jokes all night long," Dobrin said. "The ballet master and I know the show very well and we try to mix everything up."

In Detroit, they'll be doing their signature piece — "Swan Lake, Act II." It's a crowd favorite featuring dancers who put a fresh spin on the classic, cleverly using its familiarity to incorporate unexpected moments of comedy.

"Then we just throw the entire kitchen sink of vaudeville jokes, of obvious jokes, of characterization jokes — everything goes into that ballet," Dobrin added.

With their return to the Detroit Opera House for the first time since the 2000-2001 season, everyone associated with the Opera House is committed to creating a memorable visit. Jeremy Zeltzer, the chair of the Detroit Opera committee for the Trocks, helped produce events around their last visit and plans to outdo himself this time around.

As for the performances, the Opera House's artistic advisor for dance, Jon Teeuwissen, calls them "serious fun."

"This year, the Trocks are our only classical ballet offering — and I want to emphasize classical ballet," Teeuwissen said, describing how the men dance en pointe and do many things that their female counterparts cannot. "The evolution of the company over the past 50 years is that they've become highly technically skilled."

The Detroit Opera Orchestra will provide live music for the dancers, something that Teeuwissen said was the only true way to properly host a company of the Trocks' stature.

"Considering that this is the 50th anniversary for the Trocks, we wanted to do it in a respectful way that presents them at their very best in the way that they deserve to be seen," Teeuwissen said.

The Trocks convey the message that ballet is anything but boring. Teeuwissen cites "The Dying Swan" by Anna Pavlova — a historically significant piece that many people may know through its music but have never seen performed. The Trocks present it in a dynamic and engaging way.

"People enjoy the dance in a different way by [the Trocks] spoofing the dance while showing it at the same time," Teeuwissen said. "Another perfect example is the dance of the four swans in "Swan Lake"…I don't think anyone can watch it and not get a smile on their face seeing it done in a fun, whimsical way."

The company's artistic director assures audiences that they don't need to know anything about ballet to enjoy the performances.

"If you know ballet, you might understand the depth of what we're doing, which is way more complicated than it seems," Dobrin said. "But we're a comedy show first and foremost and we understand that the audience is coming to have a good time."

While the show has long been cherished by the LGBTQ+ community, Dobrin noted that its fanbase extends beyond who you might expect.

"I'm going to stereotype a bit, but there's the woman who loves ballet and she can bring her husband who hates ballet but loves comedy,"

See **Trocks**, page 24

The Martyrdom of Chanelle Pickett and the Birth of Transgender Day of Remembrance

Nov. 20 marks 26th annual recognition of trans lives lost to violence

BY ANNI ARBOUR

Editor's Note: The author is using a pseudonym for safety.

Martyrdom is a dying business. That is why nobody becomes a martyr willingly. At least, no reasonable person. It involves pain and suffering, and it never ends well.

Surely, Chanelle Pickett had no desire to become a martyr. But then again, she had no say in the matter.

Chanelle and her identical twin sister Gabrielle were born in New York City on Aug. 6, 1972. Much of what is known about the early life of the Pickett girls comes from an appearance they made on "The Jenny Jones Show" on April 5, 1993. In a segment titled "Twin Boys Living As Girls," Chanelle and Gabrielle completed one another's sentences as they alternated telling Jones and her rapt audience about their childhood.

As with many twins, they were inseparable and, although assigned male at birth, they began wearing lipstick and their mother's clothing around the age of 7. At age 12, their mother found out they identified as girls, and they became estranged. Soon after, she put them into foster care. Eventually, they were outed in high school by teachers who had been entrusted with their secret by their foster parents.

In 1993, the sisters moved to the Boston area, where they found jobs at NYNEX, a regional telephone company in the suburb of Brookline. That job only lasted six weeks after a supervisor discovered they were transgender and harassed them until they quit in February of 1995. Chanelle, who was saving for her gender-affirming surgery, was unable to find employment. So, like many other trans women in her situation, she drifted into sex work.

On Nov. 21, 1995, the first report of Chanelle's slaying appeared in the Boston Herald. Beneath the headline "'Preppy' Allegedly Kills Date In Drag," the article's writers made no attempt to hide their disdain for the victim.

"A 'preppy' Watertown computer worker searching for sex in the Combat Zone strangled his one-night stand after discovering a man's body underneath a woman's tight jeans and lacy purple top," the story read.

The accused man was William C. Palmer, who met Chanelle and Gabrielle at the Playland Café. At the time, it was the oldest gay bar in Boston. It was located near the "Combat Zone," the red-light district of the city, where its citizenry could find the strip clubs, X-rated movie houses, sex workers and drugs.

The details of their meeting differed. Palmer claimed he was unaware of Chanelle's gender as he bought the twins drinks shared cocaine with them. Gabrielle denied this claim and said Palmer definitely knew Chanelle was transgender. Other regular Playland patrons backed up her account.

The Pickett sisters and Palmer left together, stopping first at the girls' home. Gabrielle stayed behind while Chanelle went with Palmer to his apartment in nearby Watertown.

What happened next was not clear. But even the police seemed to buy Palmer's use of the "gay panic defense," which asserts that the perpetrator reacted violently out of shock after finding out that their sexual partner is gay or transgender. It was a considered a valid legal defense tactic that only this year was banned in Michigan.

While the article contained no personal information about Chanelle, the reporters devoted several paragraphs to Palmer's neighbors' perception of him. He was remembered for his wearing of sports coats and khakis and being "clean-cut" and "preppy." One called him "very outgoing and polite and nice." Yet another added that Palmer was "the nicest guy you'd ever want to know."

None of the earliest articles went into much detail about the actual murder. That would come out two years later when Palmer went to trial. During his testimony, Palmer said, "We were getting romantic and I reached down and discovered Chanelle Pickett was a man. I jumped up and I said 'You're out of here.'"

According to Palmer, at that point Chanelle attacked him, shouting and hitting him in the chest.

Rita Hestor, whose 1998 murder, along with Chanelle Picket's, led to the creation of Transgender Day of Remembrance. Public domain photo

In Palmer's words, the two scuffled and "Maybe she fell down and hit her head on the humidifier." He claimed they then fell asleep. When he awoke in the morning, he discovered Chanelle was dead.

Boston Globe columnist Patricia Smith, who covered the trial and heard all the testimony including the medical examiner's report, saw it far differently. Her impassioned, graphic description in the paper's May 19, 1997, issue, revealed what she had heard.

"He said he hit Chanelle during the struggle, maybe once, and sat on her until she settled down, still breathing. Then Palmer, who'd had one helluva long night smoking crack and all, decided to catch a few winks. When he woke up, alas, his date for the evening was dead."

Smith did not try to hide her disbelief and revulsion as she reported Pickett's murder in horrific detail.

"Then how to explain away the contusions and abrasions on Chanelle's face, the hemorrhages in the whites of her eyes, that scrape over her left cheekbone, lips bruised purple and swollen, those multiple superficial abrasions with fluid and congested as if all the blood had been forced into her head during strangulation?" she wrote.

Charged with first-degree murader, and despite the forensic evidence, the jury only found William Palmer guilty of assault and battery. He was subsequently sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison for the murder of Chanelle Pickett.

Understandably, Gabrielle and the Boston trans community as a whole were devastated by the light sentence Palmer received.

"I've seen people get more jail time for abusing animals than he's getting for what he did to her," Smith quoted one transgender observer. "If they wanted to send a message, I guess that's it. We've been judged expendable."

Compounding the tragedy of Chanelle's murder, on March 24, 2003, her sister Gabrielle died of a drug overdose. She is buried in the Potter's Field on Hart Island in the Bronx.

But Chanelle Pickett has not been forgotten. Her murder, and the 1998 murder of Rita Hester, another Massachusetts trans woman, led to the creation of the Transgender Day of Remembrance each Nov. 20. The month was chosen in memory of the shared month of their deaths, and the day, to memorialize the evening that Pickett was murdered.

Since January, at least 27 transgender or gender-expansive individuals have been murdered, according to Human Rights Campaign data. On Transgender Day of Remembrance, and always, Pride Source recognizes and celebrates the lives of Michigan victims, including Ashia "Charm" Davis and Jean Butchart (both murdered in 2023), Kelly Stough (murdered in 2018), Paris Cameron (murdered in 2019), and DeDe Ricks, Naomi Skinner, Hayden Davis and Ray Muscat (all murdered in 2022).

The Results of the 2024 Election Are, Well, Not Good. Unless You're a Bigot. Then They're Great.

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

Welp, that happened.

Actually, there's no past tense about it. Electing Trump is going to have repercussions for years… generations, really.

The United States faced a question about who we wanted to be, and unfortunately, the answer is really ugly. The race was between a well-qualified moderate Black and Indian woman and a racist loudmouth rapist and we made the wrong choice.

Man. The thing about the U.S. is that if you care about people, if you want to prevent harm, if you believe that we have an obligation to help the people who need it most, well, this country continuously breaks your heart.

There are a million post-election breakdowns out there, so you don't need another one from me. But I did hear rumbling on the left about voter fraud and, well, no. U.S. elections are safe and secure, and this one safe, secure, and had a horrific outcome. But I understand that doing conspiratorial deep dives into voting machines is easier than accepting that we live in an incredibly racist and misogynistic country that elevates the worst men to the highest levels of power. This is especially hard for white people to grapple with. But grapple we must.

> *For Republicans, hate is their strategy and after their big win, don't expect them to back off.*

We're heading into the Nightmare Scenario: A Trump presidency with a majority Republican U.S. House (most likely as ballots are still being counted. Would love to be wrong!) and Senate AND a Republican majority Supreme Court. There are literally no checks or balances, folks. Shit is going to get bad.

Chances that Obergefell v. Hodges gets overturned, undoing federal marriage equality is high. Hell, this court will probably overturn Lawrence v. Texas (2003), making sex between two people of the same sex illegal again; Romer v. Evans (1996) so that LGBTQ+ people are no longer protected under the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause; and United States v. Windsor (2013), reinstating 1996's Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) that defined marriage as a "legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife."

Things are going to get ugly. Well, they're already ugly. But they're going to get uglier. Especially for LGBTQ+ kids. Things have been getting worse for years.

"Since Donald Trump's election in 2016, LGBTQ youth have faced relentless attacks on their rights, attacks that have continued at the state level over the last 8 years, even after Trump left office," reports Teen Vogue. "Now that Trump — a convicted felon who has also been found liable for sexual abuse — has been elected to a second term, experts and queer and trans youth alike fear these attacks may only get worse."

There's something to be said about a group of adults who gang up on a marginalized population of kids and I promise you that thing is NSFW. But for Republicans, hate is their strategy and after their big win don't expect them to back off. If you are a young LGBTQ+ person, it's really important to remember that you're not alone.

Teen Vogue has a list of resources to help and first person accounts of LGBTQ+ kids reacting to Trump's election. It's more than worth a read.

I should note that there were some bright spots to be found in the election results. Democrat Sarah McBride became the first transgender person elected to Congress. Good work, Delaware!

In fact, LGBTQ+ candidates nationwide did pretty well, according to the Victory Fund, an organization dedicated to electing LGBTQ+ candidates.

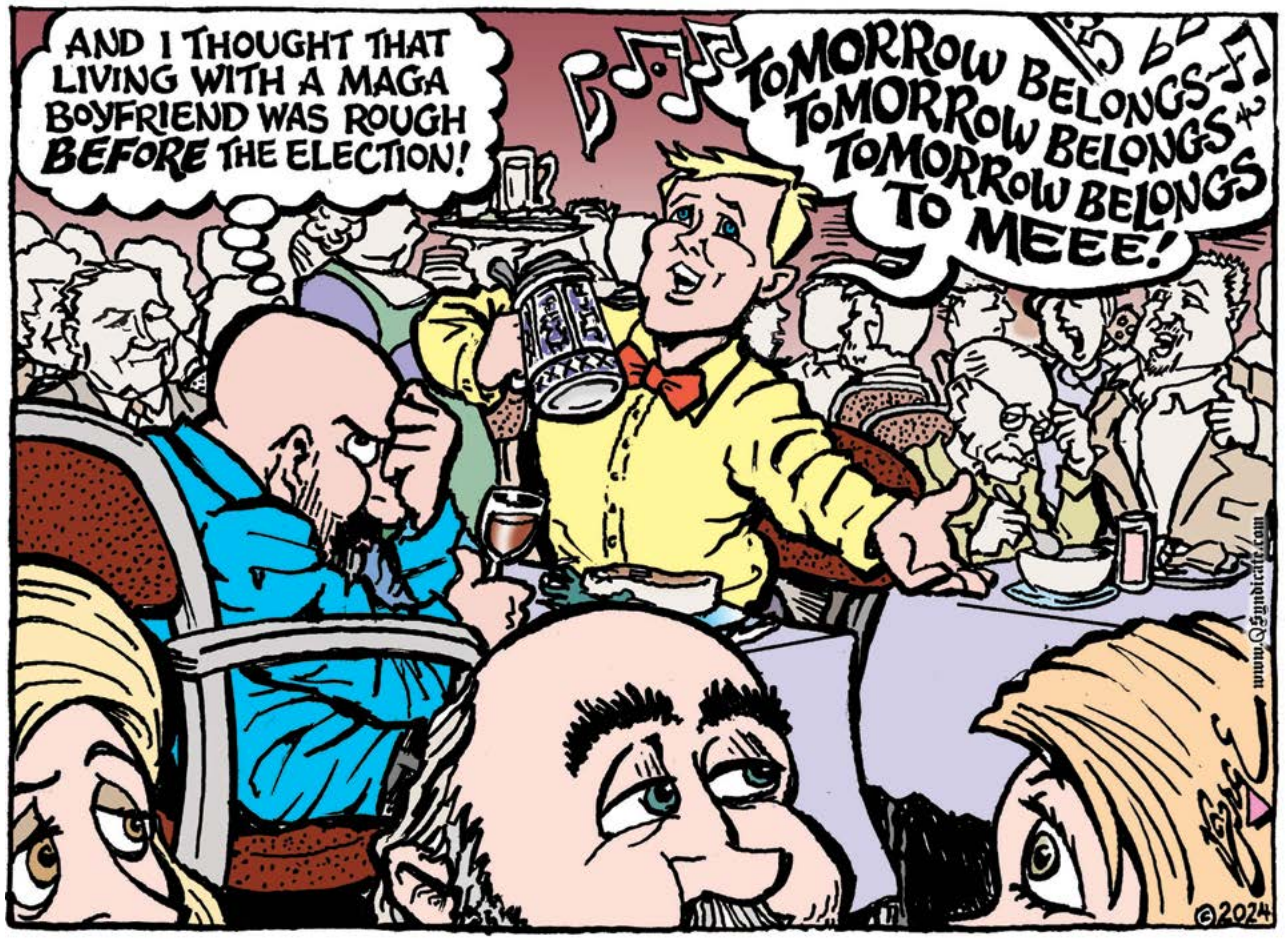
"Candidates performed very well overall on election night, with historic firsts in many key races and increased representation in the U.S. House and retaining presence in the U.S. Senate," Sean Meloy, vice president of political programs for LGBTQ+ Victory Fund, told NBC News. "These wins are hopeful, especially as their voices in federal government will be critical under the next administration." Check out the Victory Fund's website at victoryfund.org to see who was elected where.

But as they say, hope doesn't pay the bills. Or pass the bills. But it does make getting out of bed morning after morning a little bit easier.

Remember that a hostile political climate for LGBTQ+ people isn't new.

"The LGBTQ community has been here before, as have all other marginalized communities," said GLAAD President and CEO, Sarah Kate Ellis. "We must see this moment of crisis as another catalyst for change," Ellis said in a statement. "Our community knows how to take care of each other, and how to push our country and world forward."

Against all odds, we have. And against all odds, we will.



THE SCROLL

QUICK HITS & CAN'T MISSES

Michigan's LGBTQ+ Community Activates in Wake of Mixed Election Results

On the whole, the 2024 election results were beyond disappointing for the Michigan queer community. Many LGBTQ+ individuals are rightfully alarmed, angry and sad, and will need time to process what has happened and what's to come. Others are already funneling their post-election energy into action and preparing to fight the battle for LGBTQ+ equality from new postures.

On Nov. 10 in Lansing, a "Resilience in Community" event brought together groups like Lansing Pride, Free Mom Hugs, Lansing Area AIDS Network, Suits in the City, Salus Center and others, who were on hand to reassure community members that their resources are still available and to underscore the message that we are stronger together. Equality Michigan is gearing up for a Trans Policy Action Call on Nov. 14 centered on prioritizing legislation related to House Bills 5300, 5301, 5302, and 5303 ahead of the new legislative session, when Republicans will take control of the House. The bills remove barriers to legal name changes in the state.

Other events are popping up all over Michigan in response to the election results, including National Transgender Lobby Day on Nov. 16 — visit transunitycoaltion.org to learn how to get involved.

New Home for Jim Toy Community Center

Ann Arbor's Jim Toy Community Center is reopening a physical location in Ann Arbor after closing its previous site at Braun Court in January 2021 due to pandemic-related financial challenges. The original Braun Court location was a prominent gathering place for the LGBTQ+ community, surrounded by supportive local businesses that fostered a vibrant, inclusive atmosphere.

The new facility is set to open in early 2025 at 560 S. Main St., offering a 1,200-square-foot space where community members can connect, heal and thrive. The Center announced plans for in-person social programs, therapy and support groups, as well as new and expanded partnerships with local nonprofits and businesses. Uplift, Ann Arbor's new queer gathering space, hosted a kick-off fundraiser on Nov. 10, and community members will have more opportunities to support the center's reopening through volunteering and a fundraising campaign in early 2025, when the center will celebrate its 30th anniversary. Sign up for updates at jimtoycenter.org.

Calls to Trevor Project Crisis Line Increase by 700%

Following the election, calls to The Trevor Project's crisis hotline surged by 700%, as LGBTQ+ youth experienced heightened fear, anxiety and confusion over the results. The re-election of Donald Trump and his campaign's anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric have intensified mental health struggles among queer and trans youth, already impacted by discriminatory policies. Trump's proposed actions, including penalizing teachers for affirming gender identities, mirror recent state laws that have contributed to declining mental health and increased suicide risk among LGBTQ+ youth.

Jaymes Black, CEO of The Trevor Project, expressed deep concern over the situation, telling news outlet The 19th, "The current political environment in the U.S. is heavy, but it is so important for LGBTQ+ young people to know that they do not have to shoulder this weight alone." The organization urges LGBTQ+ youth to seek community support and take breaks from distressing media, offering resources like the Crisis Text Line, Trans Lifeline and online support spaces at thetrevorproject.org/get-help.

70+ LGBTQ+ Orgs Sign Solidarity Statement

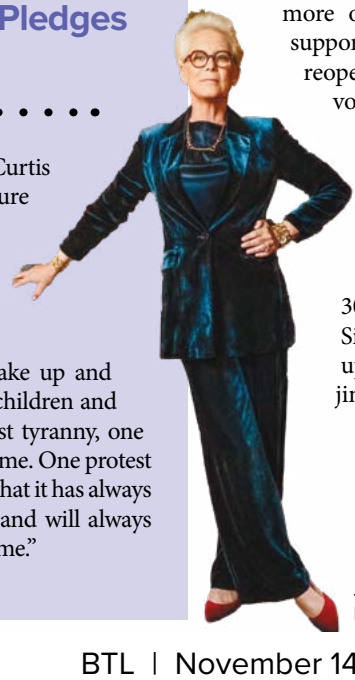
More than 70 LGBTQ+ organizations, including Equality Michigan and the Transgender Law Center, issued a solidarity statement pledging to continue fighting for LGBTQ+ rights. The statement reads, in part, "Ours is a long history of never backing down from a fight for our rights. United in our strength, during the most difficult of times, we have pushed forward and achieved significant progress across the decades… We've got this. We've got us." Read more at pflag.org.

Chill at Uplift

You deserve a break. Head to Uplift in Ann Arbor for Social Thursdays, a departure from the venue's happy chaos weekend vibe. This chill weekly event is a chance for community connection, drinks and dinner set to background music at conversation levels. Social Thursdays run from 8 p.m.-2 a.m. at Uplift (210 S. First St., Ann Arbor).

Jamie Lee Curtis Pledges Undying Allyship

Beloved ally Jamie Lee Curtis took to Instagram to reassure queer followers in the wake of Trump's win. "There will be those who will help you. Me included," she wrote, adding that people will also have to "wake up and fight… for women and our children and their futures and fight against tyranny, one day at a time. One fight at a time. One protest at a time…. [because] that's what it has always meant [to be an American] and will always mean regardless of the outcome."



Jamie Lee Curtis. Photo: Lionsgate

This Doesn't Feel Like an America for Me Anymore

How did we get here?

BY JORDYN BRADLEY

Maybe it's naive to say I really didn't think we would be in this situation again. I thought being convicted of 34 felonies, charged with sexual abuse and inciting a deadly insurrection that took over our nation's Capitol would be enough to turn people away from the reality star-turned-political tyrant.

These things feel so inherently unpatriotic to me, and yet the people who will support this man until the wheels fall off claim their patriotism and love for America is what has led to them following him unequivocally through scandal, impeachment, trial, assassination attempts and, now, another presidential candidacy.

In Trump's America, I've learned that nothing can be too surprising, especially millions of Americans voting against human rights. When some of those Americans are people who claim they love you, though, it strikes a chord. I should not have to wonder if my right to exist is on your list of critical ballot issues, especially in 2024.

In 2024, I should not be afraid to hold my girlfriend's hand in public, because people wanted potentially lower gas prices or groceries.

I should not have to wonder if my friends will be deported or brutalized, because people are racist, xenophobic and have forgotten the true meaning of "love thy neighbor." Utilizing religion as a weapon of hatred is something that no god would condone, yet many toss around these platitudes like they are spare change.

I should not have to question if my dream of being a mother will ever become a reality. Especially now, it's a dream I've carried with me with great uncertainty — uncertainty about whether I will even be able to conceive at all with potential restrictions on IVF and other fertility treatments at both the state and national levels. I shouldn't have to change the timeline in which I want to live my life by four years in the hopes that, after then, I will be safe.

There are no guarantees I will ever be fully safe and protected — as a woman, as a queer person and as an American.

What are we supposed to do when the people we love don't love us enough to vote for candidates who will protect us? All for taxes?

I hope the potential tax savings are worth the price of losing children, siblings, parents and friends, because we shouldn't have to overlook a "difference in beliefs" that deems us unworthy of protecting.

I hope the potential tax savings are worth the price of having blood on your hands from another school shooting, another suicide or another maternal death because a fellow American didn't have access to a life-saving abortion, even after miscarriage, rape or incest.

If rape were such an issue, though, the 47th President of the United States wouldn't be someone who has been ordered to pay a victim $83 million.

If taxes were such an issue, though, the 47th President of the United States wouldn't be someone who has been busted by the FBI and the New York District Attorney for falsifying business records.

It wouldn't be someone promising tax cuts to the rich and changing horses midstream while we're finally overcoming this post-Covid inflation. (I also urge anyone to look up how Trump's tariff plans will hurt our economy and U.S. businesses, not help them.)

If I am able to have a family — whether during this next presidency or not — I hope my children feel safe, secure and know that I will never stop fighting for them to have more rights than I did. Many of our parents may not be able to say the same.

I know queer people don't need to hear this; we know what is at stake here because it's our lives and livelihoods. We have been the ones out advocating for ourselves, knocking on doors, speaking out on social media and at the dinner table. I'm not going to spend the days after election results telling you to go out and fight more, because I know you are tired. I am too.

Looking out for your neighbors is exhausting when many of your neighbors wouldn't offer you a cup of sugar, because you're Black, trans or an immigrant. We deserve a break from fighting for the basic human rights that we should be afforded.

What I will say, though, is to remember the community support you have in these times. Find comfort in the people who know why you are grieving, and who let you grieve. Go to a rage room. Scream in your car. Distance yourself this holiday season if you need to (and are able). Delete people from social media. Or delete social media altogether. Maybe even contact your medical provider and schedule a check-up before January, if you think it might help.

It's OK to mourn life as you knew it; we've lived through too many unprecedented times already not to.

But the biggest piece to remember in all of this is to live. They've threatened to take so much from us already, but we cannot let them have who we are at our core: our passions, our talents, our quirks, our empathy, our light. We won't put our lives off for another four years, waiting and hoping for something else.

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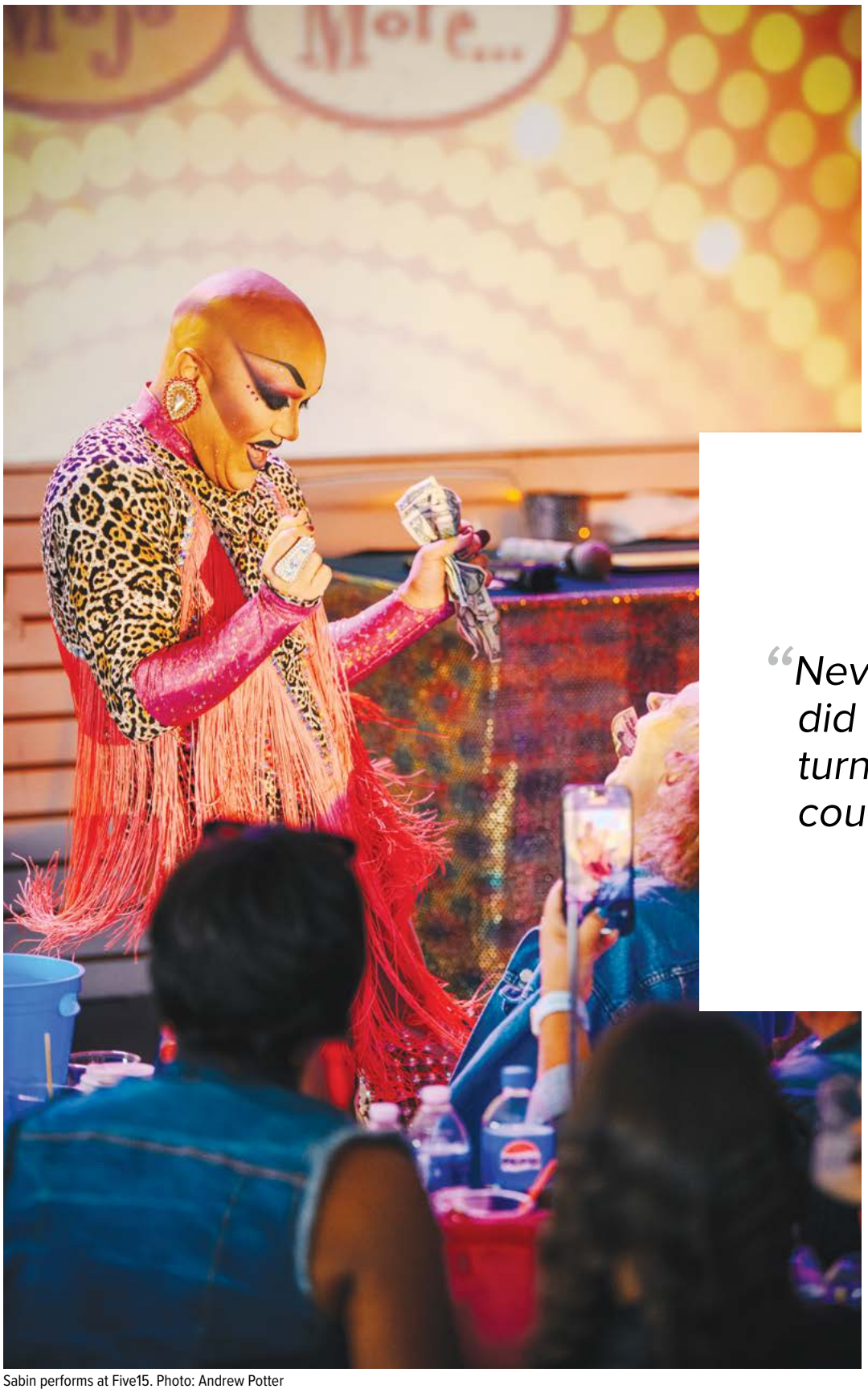
The 15-Year Bingo Revolution

How Five15 — where queer folks and housewives come together — built a national presence around drag queen bingo



Sabin performs at Five15. Photo: Andrew Potter

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

For 15 years, Five15's drag queen bingo has been much more than just a night of sassy jokes, glitter and lucky numbers. What started as a whimsical nod to an episode of "Sex and the City" has grown into something deeper and more meaningful.

Co-owner Gary Baglio says the weekly event has become a powerful force for community connection — bringing together unlikely friends, bridging divides and breaking down barriers, one bingo card at a time. It's a surprising impact for an event built around laughter and lighthearted fun, with drag queens as its fabulous ambassadors of inclusivity.

> *"Never in a million years did I ever think it would turn into what it has, but I couldn't be more proud."*

"I was watching the show 15 years ago, and the girls were going to drag queen bingo, and I thought, 'What a cool idea!' And here we are," he says with a hearty laugh.

"I've got a million stories that would just tickle your funny bone and warm your heart," Baglio adds. "Never in a million years did I ever think it would turn into what it has, but I couldn't be more proud."

In the early days, Royal Oak's Five15 marketed drag queen bingo mostly to the LGBTQ+ community. "It seemed like the obvious thing to do," Baglio recalls. "It did take off right away, but then it started to wear off a little bit… And then, all of the sudden, we started to have bachelorette parties show up and the red hat ladies and book clubs and other demographics. It was kind of shocking, but they just loved it."

These days, Five15's drag queen bingo events, which happen on most days of the week, are brimming with middle-aged housewives and, increasingly, straight men. Baglio mentions a biker club that rents out a whole night of drag queen bingo each year that corresponds with their annual meeting in Detroit. "You'd never expect to see it, but it's a bunch of macho biker guys and, let me tell you, they have the time of their lives," he says. "It's morphed over the years and now it's probably a good 40% male-to-female ratio. The more men in the audience, the more fun they have, and that's really surprised me over the years."

While drag queen bingo events are available all over town and nationally, not all drag queen bingo is created equally. Baglio feels confident that Five15 stands out from the crowd, due in large part to the talent of hosts like the legendary Detroit drag performer Sabin, who has been with Five15 from the beginning, and stars like Trixie Deluxxe, a former co-host on WDRQ's '90s morning show with Jay Towers. Shows also feature acts like the "trailer park" stylings of Iowna Lotza-Katz, Orlando-based Carol Lee (who delights players with twisted tales of Hollywood stars), Electra from Ft. Lauderdale and New

See **Drag Queen Bingo**, page 18

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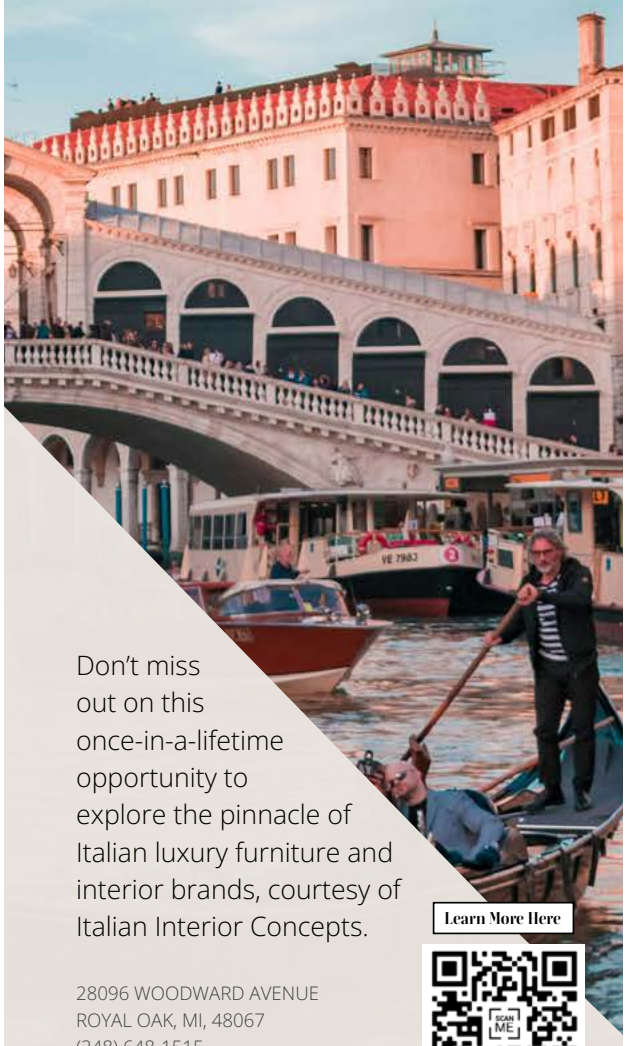

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Drag queen bingo at Five15. Photos: Andrew Potter

Drag Queen Bingo

Continued from page 16

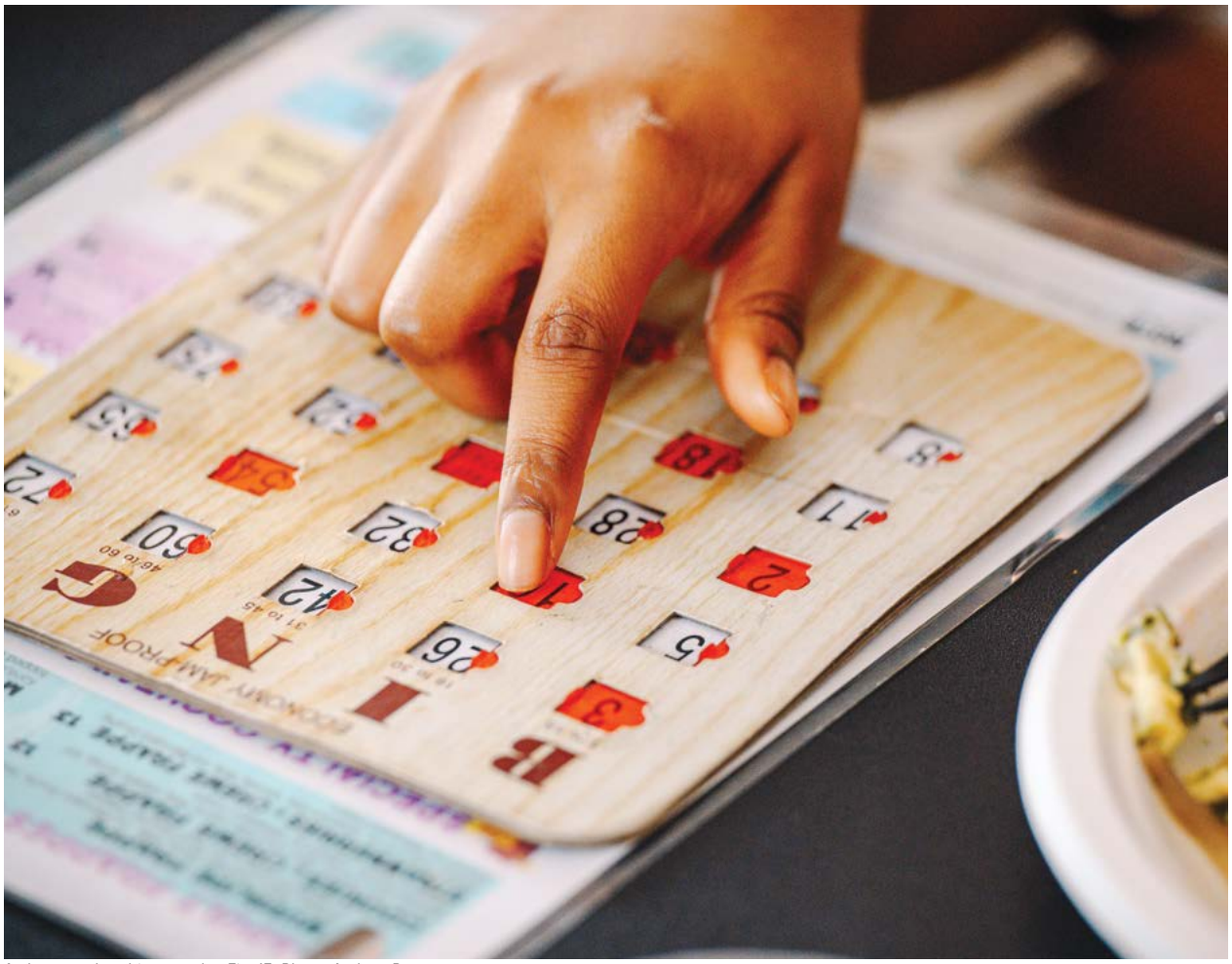
Yorker Angel Sheridan, who, Baglio assures us, is no angel.

Baglio is struck by how much attention Five15 has received from major national drag queen performers. "We've earned this reputation, and what makes me even more proud is on a personal level," he says. "When I grew up in this area as a kid, we didn't really have the things that the larger cities had, like Chicago, New York, San Francisco or Miami. I had to travel to have a big gay weekend, to find the larger entertainment. But we bring it out here now, and we give it our local community and it makes me proud that the younger people can appreciate all the things that I didn't have when I was growing up."

During Royal Oak Pride in July, Five15 hosted some of that big-name entertainment, including finalists Roxxxy Andrews and Angeria Paris VanMichaels from the latest season of "RuPaul's Drag Race All-Stars," in which VanMichaels took home the crown.

Drag queen bingo pioneer Sabin, aka Tyler Cooper, didn't set out to become a fixture at Five15, but it might have been fate. "Oh. Let me tell you how I got this job," Cooper tells Pride Source, before describing the hot summer day when he was working as an extra in downtown Royal Oak on the set of "Prayers for Bobby," the Sigourney Weaver movie based on the true story of a mother grappling with the suicide of her gay son.

"I was in makeup and in the heat for 11 hours, and it was not fun, really, the overall experience of this; it's just a whole lot of hurry up and wait. Everybody was getting restless. So, I started talking to people as they were walking down the street. We jump off the float for a few minutes and I'm making conversation to fill the time, just being myself," Cooper recalls. "Gary was standing outside



A player marks a bingo card at Five15. Photo: Andrew Potter

the store watching the interactions and heard me talking to people. He thought my comedy was a lot of fun."

Later, Baglio tracked Cooper down at The Malebox, a now-closed bar on Seven Mile in Detroit, to watch him perform as Sabin in a booty contest and asked him to help get drag queen bingo started at Five15. "So I just got my job basically being myself, making conversation, cracking jokes and whatever," he recalls. "My first show was on Jan. 20th, 15 years ago, and I've been there ever since. I was the first queen that ever walked through the door, so I originated drag queen bingo in Royal Oak."

Cooper says he's auditioned almost every performer who has hosted drag queen bingo at the venue, apart from established acts like Trixie Deluxxe. Often, he mentors new hosts as they get up to speed on the ins and outs of creating an engaging show that appeals to a wide audience — something that looks much easier than it really is.

"I always tell my friends that they don't realize sometimes how hard the job is," Cooper says. "When you're doing a drag show, it's a little bit different, you interject five, 10 minutes of comedy and then it's a performance and then a couple minutes of comedy and you introduce another performance. There are constant breaks. Bingo is a whole different animal."

Each bingo session focuses on one performer who has to entertain over 100 people for an hour-and-a-half to two hours. "I've seen people get eaten alive in that atmosphere because it's hard and the audience will take over if you can't express dominance. It's you and a microphone and you've either got it or you don't. I don't know how I got in there, but I'm very fortunate for what I get to do."

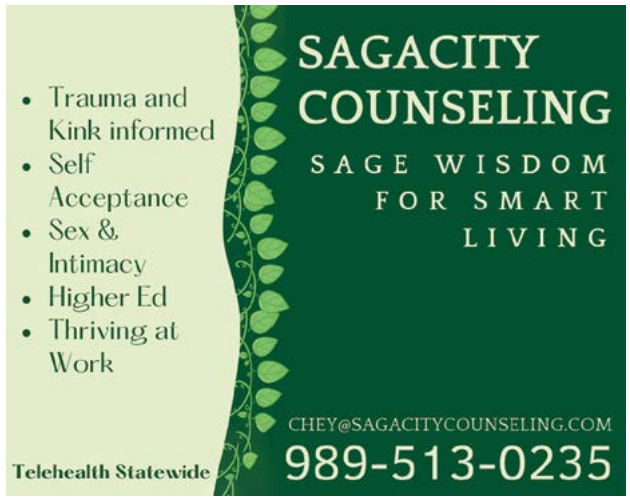
"All of it is a crazy honor," Cooper says. "I work with some of the funniest people I've ever met, and the fact that I've been able to share the stage with them and work alongside them and sometimes even kind of mentor a little bit is really kind of a crazy thing."

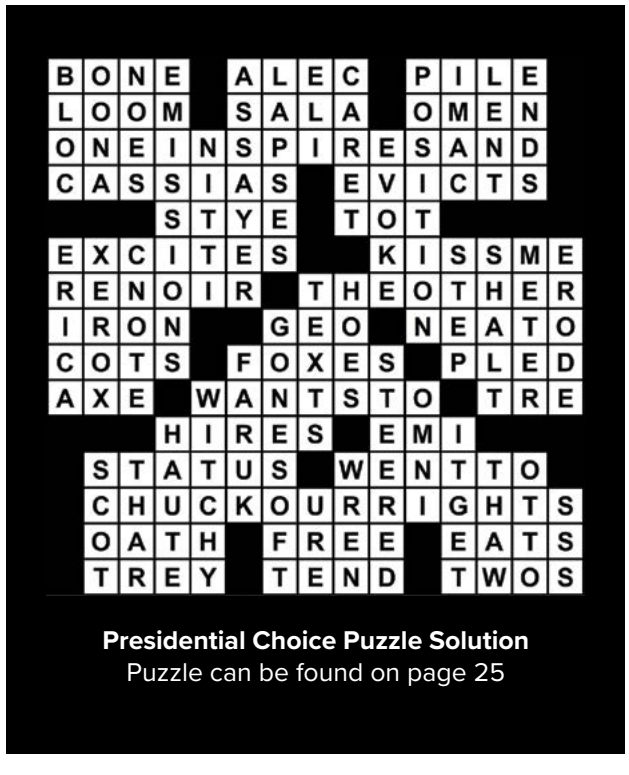
In June, Cooper was a special guest and featured speaker at Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's annual Pride celebration at the governor's mansion in Lansing, making him the first drag queen to appear as such. Whitmer, who Cooper considers a true friend, has been vocally supportive of drag queen culture in Michigan. The experience, he says, was "surreal."

"I did make a little bit of history there," Cooper acknowledges. "And it's incredible because I grew up in a really small town, and to be able to go from a small town to being in that situation with… I mean, I hate to use the term 'movers and shakers,' but these people in attendance are literally shaping our lives every day." That experience may feel even more poignant after the Nov. 5 election.

After the election results rolled in, Baglio reached out on Facebook to share words of comfort. "Today, many of us are feeling a deep, shared sorry — a feeling that the world has shifted in ways that leave us uncertain, hurt and profoundly shaken," he wrote. "We know that today, the path forward may feel harder than ever. But please know this: Pronto and Five15 stand firmly with you, as safe spaces where everyone is cherished, supported and celebrated just as they are."

"In the face of the unknown, we pledge to continue creating a sanctuary for all, a place to gather, laugh, find comfort and connect," he continued. "Here, you are valued, and you belong. We will keep our doors and our hearts open, to stand resiliently beside each of you. And we will keep working harder, day after day, to hold this light for our community — until we can't. Stay strong, stay proud and know you are loved."





Presidential Choice Puzzle Solution
Puzzle can be found on page 25

Tegan and Sara. Photo: Hulu

The Horror Behind the Music

Tegan and Sara's unbelievable real-life catfishing saga takes center stage in 'Fanatical'

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

The new Hulu documentary "Fanatical: The Catfishing of Tegan and Sara" makes some horror films look like Disney fare. That's because something is especially scary when it could happen to you. Or in this case, a lesbian Canadian indie-turned-pop duo beloved by the LGBTQ+ community: Tegan and her twin sister Sara Quin. To chilling effect, the film chronicles a terrifying series of events that infiltrated their lives.

In the early stages of their rise in the 1990s, Tegan and Sara — known for their infectious indie-rock songs in the early 2000s — became iconic figures within the LGBTQ+ community, at a time when openly queer musicians were still a rarity. Their deep connection with queer fans was particularly strong, given the scarcity of such representation in music. Their mainstream breakthrough came with the release of "Heartthrob" in 2012, marking their shift to synth-pop and earning them millions of new fans, including Taylor Swift, with whom they later performed during her "Red" tour that same year.

But behind the scenes, the Quins were facing a disturbing betrayal. Tegan discovered in 2011 that someone with access to deeply personal details of their lives — details they hadn't shared publicly, like their mother's cancer diagnosis — was impersonating her and had been since 2008. This "fake Tegan," the name they used within their inner circle to keep track of the imposter sister, befriended fans on social media, even engaging in romantic conversations, all while feeding them false information and ghosting on planned meetups. Things escalated further: their passports were leaked, private photos were made public, and the invasion of their privacy continued. Beyond the Quins, their closest friends, cyber security specialists, the FBI and numerous victims who were deceived by fake Tegan, no one knew the sisters were living through this real-life nightmare. "Just so frightening and overwhelming," Tegan shares. "And I'm really good at dissociating from scary things."

On a video call with Tegan, who I interviewed in 2013 while this was happening in the background, she admitted why they chose to stay silent about being catfished at the time. Primarily it was out of necessity for the safety of them and the numerous people — from fans to lovers — deeply affected by fake Tegan. "We didn't talk about it publicly, because it just seemed like it would be worse," she says. "It would make it worse, it would draw too much attention. It might attract more predators."

The other reason is simple, and once you watch the film, it becomes clear — it unfolds like a whodunit game of "Clue," or as the documentary itself references, given the Myspace-era time frame in which some of this is happening, the 1995 cyber-thriller "The Net." Except this wasn't a movie.

"It's not an easy story to sit down and tell," Tegan explains. There were other difficult decisions they had to make, too, like figuring out who they could trust with sensitive details. What if they confided in the person who was actually the imposter, posing as Tegan? She adds, "I certainly couldn't email about it, because I wasn't 100% sure my emails weren't being constantly hacked."

Their catfishing ordeal is compelling in its own right, but director Erin Lee Carter frames this disturbing story within the larger context of how fame can amplify situations where fans feel entitled to the most intimate details of the artists they admire. "It's just so unnatural to be famous," Tegan reflects, acknowledging that the artist-fan relationship should be centered on the music — yet stardom often complicates that dynamic, making it something far more invasive or even parasocialistic. Given this, can we really blame Chappell Roan for setting stricter boundaries with fans and photographers? "Fanatical" may just challenge your perspective on whether these boundaries are an act of ingratitude or simply a necessary part of doing the job of an artist who also happens to be a person.

"There were just expectations on artists," she reflects. "There's always been, and I think these days the younger artists are stepping up and going, 'Actually, I don't want to do this.' I love how Mitski handled this record cycle. They virtually did no press."

She says that Mitski, a fellow queer artist, is "an example of an artist who said, 'The world's my oyster, and everyone is listening to me and talking about me right now, and I'm

not going to take every opportunity. I'm not.' And I think some of these younger artists are prioritizing themselves and their health and their families over fame. A lot of queer artists and women, specifically, are speaking out right now, which is so inspiring and amazing."

She adds that Roan is "just one artist basically saying, 'Leave me alone.' I mean, you think every famous person likes having to spend six or seven figures a year on security? Have their houses camped out at? They can't go for dinner or to Disney World with their kids without people coming up and asking for selfies. We're at a point in our culture where we have to ask ourselves if that's OK. People will tell you, 'Well, that's your job, and you owe that to us.' And I'm not interested in playing that game because I don't feel that way. It's absolutely not my job, and I'm absolutely not."

Chalk it up to Tegan and Sara being 43 now — and also being inspired by a new generation of artists like Roan. "I don't feel like I owe anyone anything except for what I choose to put out in the world, and you can take it or leave it, you know, so I don't…," she says, laughing. "I think we're old."

"We're not those kinds of people where you can scour our social media," she adds. "You don't see us with our friends. You don't see us with our family. You don't see us with our partners. We keep the majority of ourselves private, but I think we do a really excellent job of still making you feel like you're a part of what we're building and the music and our story, but we're very, very protective of our personal life now."

Tegan recognizes how vastly different being a public figure would feel in the 1990s; for one major reason she's grateful the duo did make waves before information was tweeted and dissected on Reddit. The sisters built relationships with their loyal queer following offline, through more direct, personal and physical methods, like in small clubs, in magazine interviews and during meet-and-greets.

"Culturally, everything has shifted so much in the last 20 years," she says. "We're so glad there was no Internet when we were teenagers," she says, "because we would have absolutely filmed ourselves and put ourselves on the internet. It's no judgment of people that are doing it. We would have done it. We filmed ourselves all the time, but we just played it for our friends."

The violation of their privacy that would come later serves as a stark reminder of how drastically the internet can alter someone's life. While stealing intimate details once required breaking into a filing cabinet by first breaking into someone's house, now it only takes a few clicks.

The film asks, with urgency and abiding relevancy: What exactly is the "job" of a pop star? The follow-up question it seems to ask is just as important: Is that job different for queer pop stars? For queer artists in the pre-digital age of the 1990s, when social media did not provide a window into the lives of their favorite artists, fans of queer artists felt the need to understand the identities of those they admired. To love them was to know them, fully. Tegan and Sara became mirrors for fans, reflecting their own identities and experiences — a connection I can personally relate to. While many queer artists wouldn't overtly label the pressure of this representation as a burden, and many express gratitude for offering visibility to those who need it, this responsibility often comes at the cost of privacy and the erosion of personal boundaries.

Tegan and Sara. Photo: Hulu

> *"The film asks, with urgency and abiding relevancy: What exactly is the 'job' of a pop star? The follow-up question it seems to ask is just as important: Is that job different for queer pop stars?"*

During their career ascension especially, Tegan acknowledges that she and Sara kept some healthy distance from fans, but their very presence as openly queer artists created a deep connection with many in the queer community. For many queer people, finding a queer-to-queer experience was rare, and this made their bond with Tegan and Sara even more significant.

"I definitely think we made a lot of space for queer people, for sure," she says. "I think they were feeling very realized and seen by us, and we felt the same. I was looking out into an audience of people who looked like me, who lived the same lifestyle at times when we didn't even have equal rights. There was a pretty epic energy exchange and love felt."

See **Tegan and Sara**, page 26

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Ferndale (Parking Structure)
Allen & Troy - West of Woodward
Food Gifts
Baked goods, hot sauce, treats
Hundreds of One of a kind Holiday Gifts
They won't have a bowl like this one by Susan Davidson
Gifts for people Gifts for Dogs
Kelsey Didia
Hanging Art Gifts
Prints by Brian Fritz
Gifts for the birds, and bird lovers
Jewelry and other wearable art
Linda Hassell and a dozen more wearable artists
Cheryl English
Gifts for kids
Helen McBride
Cosmetics, Candles, Shirts, Stickers and 100 more makers.
Free Admission
Bring canned food to donate
A Ferndale style Holiday Market
FerndaleUnderground.com

Uplift, Ann Arbor's New Queer Haven, Arrives at Just the Right Time

New hope arises in a post-\aut\ Bar era

BY UTHMAN OLAGOKE

Inside Uplift at the grand opening. Photo: Uthman Olagoke

Before moving to Ann Arbor for grad school, I worked as an urban planner, where the concept of a "community anchor" was central to my work. In urban planning, a community anchor is more than just a longstanding establishment — it's a fixture that builds identity, fosters social cohesion and offers a sense of place. Community anchors aren't just valuable for their stability; they're essential hubs in times of crisis and change, helping people find resources, share support and recover together.

For me, as a gay and queer person, some of the community anchors I cherished most were gay bars. These weren't just places to unwind — they were where I found a sense of home, connection and identity. So when I arrived in Ann Arbor and learned that the city's last bar dedicated to the LGBTQ+ community, \aut\ Bar, had permanently closed in 2020 during the pandemic, it felt like a real loss. The legendary bar had been one of those community anchors, part of a cluster of buildings on Braun Court that also housed Common Language Bookstore, the Jim Toy Community Center and the gay-owned Trillium Real Estate.

Since then, the community here has shown its resilience, creating new pop-up-style spaces. There were weekly LGBTQ+ socials at Circ Bar and The Bar At 327 Braun Court when I first moved here. Two summers ago, I stumbled upon a summer volleyball pick-up league for gay men, called Volleybro, which has grown significantly in popularity over the last couple of years. This fall, I even began co-hosting a monthly queer social at The Grotto to help fill the gap left by \aut\ Bar. These gatherings allowed us to stay connected and visible, but without a permanent physical space, they could only go so far. True community anchors are those you can rely on year-round — a place that's always open, where LGBTQ+ folks know they'll be welcomed any night of the week.

This is why the opening of Uplift, Ann Arbor's newest LGBTQ+ bar, has been met with such excitement. Uplift officially opened its doors on Oct. 30, and from the first night, it was clear that it had the potential to be much more than just another bar. The space was buzzing with energy and connection, with people not only eager to dance and celebrate but also to reconnect and feel part of something. I went back two more nights — the next night for Halloween and again on Nov. 1 for a friend's birthday. Each time, Uplift felt more like a home base. I watched friends reunite, strangers strike up conversations and folks let loose on the dance floor, all in a space that felt safe, inclusive and joyful.

Uplift's co-owners and staff seem committed to making this bar a true community anchor. They're not just interested in the business of a gay bar — they're building something sustainable and inclusive. One of Uplift's co-founders, Saharsh Hajela, takes the time to ask patrons what kinds of events they'd like to see, how they can better serve the community, and how to ensure everyone feels welcome. This kind of attention to the needs of the LGBTQ+ community is rare, and it reinforces Uplift's potential to be a reliable, supportive space where people can come together not only for nightlife but for belonging and community support.

Uplift is also opening at a time when LGBTQ+ community anchors are more important than ever. In a world where queer spaces are disappearing and anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric is on the rise, these places aren't just nice to have — they're necessary. Community anchors like Uplift offer more than just a place to dance; they are spaces of resilience and solidarity. For many LGBTQ+ people, especially those in smaller cities, the presence of a dedicated, stable queer space makes a difference in how safe, seen and supported they feel in their own community.

Reflecting on the past year, I'm incredibly grateful for the gatherings and social events that kept us together while we waited for a new community anchor. Co-hosting events at The Grotto showed me the depth of our community's resilience and adaptability. Now, with Uplift in the picture, I'm considering how my own role as an organizer might evolve. Part of me is ready to step back, knowing that Uplift can offer the steady, reliable presence we've been craving. Over the past two weeks since its opening, Uplift has hosted a variety of daily events, including an election watch party, a brat dance party, Halloween festivities, drag brunch and social hour.

In the end, a community anchor like Uplift is about so much more than nightlife. It's about a sense of place and belonging, about having somewhere you can return to time and again, knowing it will welcome you with open arms. For Ann Arbor's LGBTQ+ community, Uplift offers the consistency, connection and care that makes a true anchor — one that holds people together in both ordinary times and times of need.

As I danced on Uplift's opening night, surrounded by friends and even making new ones, I felt something that had been missing since I arrived here — a sense of home. And that's what a real community anchor provides: a place where you don't just have a good time, but where you find belonging, resilience and joy. With Uplift here, I have no doubt that Ann Arbor's LGBTQ+ community has gained a space where we can feel grounded, supported and, most importantly, at home.

Uthman Olagoke (he/him) is a doctoral candidate in Design Science at the University of Michigan.

Election Analysis
Continued from page 8

because that's what's getting these folks to show up."

Other important wins and losses

Republican senators won in large numbers, securing the Senate. And while ballots are still being counted across the country, at the time of this writing, it looks as though the House is going to stay in Republican control. Both of which strengthen Trump's ability to govern when he comes into power.

Similarly, Michigan's historic Democratic state trifecta has been broken up — with Republicans taking the state House. However, even with all the change, there's good news this election for LGBTQ+ Michiganders.

Kaplan noted that the victory of Justice Kyra Harris Bolden and Kimberly Ann Thomas (both of which hold left leaning tendencies) in their races for seats on the Michigan Supreme Court would bolster LGBTQ+ protections in Michigan. The loss of the state House may make it harder to pass LGBTQ+ legislation, but the 5-2 progressive split of the state Supreme Court will further protect what's already in place, he said.

Knott added that Gov. Whitmer will still be in power for the next two years.

"We can't forget that we have one heck of a strong champion for LGBTQ+ Michiganders in Gov. Whitmer and her administration, Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson and, of course, the attorney general [out lesbian Dana Nessel]," Knott said. "The women in the executive branch have had our back repeatedly — they have demonstrated that. They have our back and that gives me peace of mind."

U.S. Sen.-elect Elissa Slotkin, who has a history of supporting pro-LGBTQ+ legislation, won her seat on the Senate by a razor thin margin.

And outside of Michigan, there are advancements being made. For the first time in history, two Black women — Angela Alsobrooks and Lisa Bluntwill — will serve in the U.S. Senate at the same time.

Sarah McBride won Delaware's only House seat, becoming the first out transgender person elected to the U.S. Congress. Open Wisconsin lesbian Sen. Tammy Baldwin won re-election. And in Minnesota, voters re-elected three trans members of the state legislature.

Furthermore, the majority of voters who had abortion on the ballot chose to expand or protect it, even in states that voted for Trump.

Robinson said that split ballots show that progress is still moving forward.

"You did see some real hopeful victories there, and I think it's a testament to the future of the party," she said. "We have such a phenomenal bench — there's so many people that are in state offices and city councils and now running for Congress that I'm excited about what the future of our movement has to offer."

Robinson added, "You have so many emerging leaders that are ready to carry the torch that know how to win in challenging environments, know how to handle tough questions and that are getting the experience they need in an elected office to be ready to run for higher and higher offices over time. All of this is a good sign for the future of our party and the future of our movement."

Moving forward

When looking ahead, Robinson encouraged LGBTQ+ community members to take a moment to feel the impact of this election. "Feel the grief, because I think how heavy the grief feels is also how heavy the weight of responsibility we have to continue the work is," Robinson said.

Taking care of one another, creating action before Trump is sworn in on Jan. 20 and preparing for what comes next are the best things LGBTQ+ Americans can do right now, Robinson noted.

Kaplan said that care for one another is best shown through a commitment to community.

"I think all of us have to commit ourselves to our community and to our most vulnerable members of our community," he said. "What are we going to do to stand up for these folks? What can we do? We're gonna have to think creatively. If it's not legislation, if that can't pass, can we raise money for a program that provides support? We're just going to have to really take a look and see what are things that we can do."

Knott encourages pushing through legislation on a local level before new state House members are sworn in.

"We're gonna work with the current legislature before new officials are sworn into office to enshrine as many protections as possible to protect LGBTQ+ people," she said. "We have our name-changing identity documents legislation — that's House bills 5300 through 5303. We've got to make sure that these bills get their time before members of both chambers, that they have an opportunity for a floor vote and get put on the Governor's desk before they adjourn for the year."

Similar action needs to be taken on a national level, Robinson said.

"We expect that during this lame duck Congress, one of the big to-do's will be to pass a full budget," Robinson explained. "We want to make sure that when that budget passes, there aren't any riders or amendments included that try to chip away at our rights."

She encouraged voters to hold their members of Congress accountable whether in the budget battle or when it comes to their rhetoric post-election, now that Trump has won.

But most of all, Knott said it was important to remember the history of LGBTQ+ activists when faced with new opposition.

"Our movement is resilient," she said. "We've been here before, and organizations like Equality Michigan are built for this moment — we're going to be here and we're going to continue to fight."

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◂ **Trocks**
Continued from page 10

Dobrin said. "They can bring their children of whatever age — it's a good introduction to ballet for children. There's a lot of nets that we throw and capture people. We have a lot of seniors. It's a really eclectic group."

Dobrin said there didn't used to be children in the audience when he joined in 1980 and now there are lots of children. Society has changed more than the dance company, he said. He recognized that, while their repertory has grown for a half century, so have advancements for the LGBTQ+ community.

"We're an all-male comedy ballet company and that's what we do," Dobrin said. "The issues that are very predominant now, especially for a younger generation, we've been dealing with those issues since I joined… gender issues, what does it mean to be a man or a woman? How does the gay and lesbian dynamic fit into that? We've been dealing with those issues for decades. In that regard, society has caught up with us."

He mentioned that the company has always showcased a diverse range of body types, skin tones, and ethnic backgrounds, with nearly 99% of the members identifying as gay.

"The gay community isn't one block of people," Dobrin said. "We're all individuals and the audience has always appreciated that."

While moving in classical ballet circles, Dobrin mentioned they've maintained close ties with the drag community. One dancer who was with their company for many years, Brooke Lynn Heights, was a finalist during season 11 of "RuPaul's Drag Race."

Zeltzer shared that for many years, the Trocks were an audacious presence in the off-off-off-Broadway scene, shaking up the ballet world while representing the LGBTQ+ community with artistic excellence.

"They became a worldwide sensation, but in the early days, they were touring small cities like South Bend, Indiana and really putting a good face on our community by doing so," Zeltzer said.

While the Trocks have certainly evolved into an internationally respected, world-class company, Teeuwissen points out that what they are doing continues to be important because of the recent backlash against the LGBTQ+ community.

The Trocks. Courtesy photo

"Politicians have made an issue over storytelling by drag artists," Teeuwissen said. "It's ridiculous in my opinion, but it underscores that the company is still very relevant given the times we are in. They are serious in that they're so technically proficient and that they're fun in the parody that they do — but they're also serious in the statement that they're making about acceptance, particularly in today's time when we have a significant amount of the population that is dealing with being non-binary or gender-bending."

When it comes to the backlash against drag and the trans community, the Detroit Opera House has a simple response: "We're presenting it and putting it on the stage," Teeuwissen said, "which I think is the biggest statement we could possibly make."

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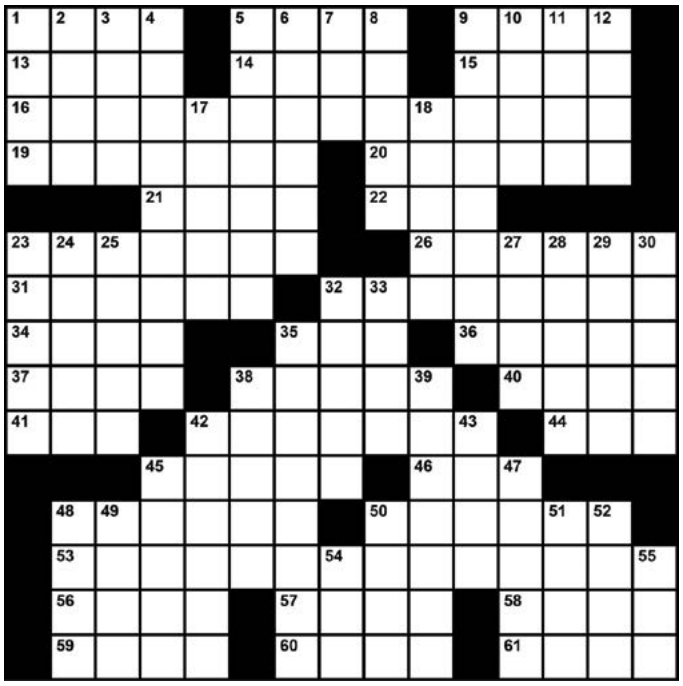

Presidential Choice

Across

1 Erection, in slang
5 Former Trump portrayer Baldwin
9 Load of money
13 Fruit of the ___
14 Room for Frida
15 Rainbow, to some
16 Start of a quote from Randy Rainbow's "The Lawyer or the Conman"
19 Cinnamon trees
20 Kicks out to the street
21 It makes watching porn harder
22 Real babe
23 More of the quote
26 Broadway request for Kate
31 "The Bathers" painter
32 More of the quote
34 Muscle Marys pump it
35 Prefix with political
36 "Faboo!"
37 Where one sleeps with privates
38 Chicken coop raiders
40 Asked for on bended knee
41 Tin Woodsman's tool
42 More of the quote
44 Threesome for Michelangelo
45 Brings on
46 London label
48 Condition of affairs
50 Didn't skip
53 End of the quote
56 What a boy scout takes
57 Like love, for some
58 Goes down on
59 Parker of _South Park_
60 Mind the bar
61 Animal groups that cruised with Noah

Down

1 Voting group
2 Sometime Capote associate Chaplin
3 Naysayers' words
4 Nocturnal releases
5 Ore analyst
6 Returns to homophobia, e.g.
7 Thornton Wilder, for one
8 Insertion indicator
9 How lovers lie
10 Apple that isn't a fruit
11 Fasting time
12 _All's Well That ___ Well_
17 Capone colleague
18 Cause to come out
23 Susan in _All My Children_
24 Big name in nonheterosexual reproducing
25 100 smackers
27 _Brady Bunch_ prefix
28 Auxiliary to King James
29 Online stat exaggeration?
30 Lose ground
32 Sends a selfie, for example
33 Gardening tools for prostitutes?
35 Become less able to penetrate
38 Egyptian king until 1952
39 Took the wheel
42 The Eagles' "___ Woman"
43 Potent leader?
45 Like Beard's cuisine
47 "Does ___ any better than this?"
48 Dundee denizen
49 "___ she blows!"
50 Little chirper
51 Warm to persistent come-ons
52 Ulrich of a landmark gay rights case
54 Moist ending
55 Teakettle sound

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◂ Tegan and Sara
Continued from page 21

As for fake Tegan, the film takes you through a maze of potential suspects, including those closest to them and die-hard fans. But it also shifted course during the actual filming of it, the primary reason being "it's a complicated portrait that we have of this person," Tegan says. "I think this person was young and confused and has issues. It just felt time to move on."

"By the end of production, I think we all had a really complicated understanding of everyone in the movie," she adds. "I mean, many of the victims had also victimized me. Many of the victims were also deeply apologetic, and were like, 'What was I doing on Tumblr, looking for your personal email?'"

Tegan describes "Fanatical" as "a bit of a time machine" that examines just how "commonplace and normalized" it has become to pry into the lives of public figures. Even as they were making the documentary, she says, "we just recognized that this film ended up being a human story about the internet and fame." Although the film provided Tegan with "the closure I needed" regarding fake Tegan, new evidence has surfaced regarding that person's identity. People have come forward with additional information, leading to breakthroughs. "We had some pretty revelatory meetings with an FBI profiler and investigator with 25 years of experience," she says. "They reviewed everything and created a fascinating map, which is why we think we know who the fake Tegan is." According to the film, which Tegan again confirmed during our interview, all the physical evidence so far points to someone in the U.K.

With this saga mostly behind them, Tegan and Sara are considering their follow-up to 2022's "Crybaby." "We're still going to make music," Tegan assures. "We're just going to do it on our own terms, like we always have."

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